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King, Nelson, "Pricing Transparency in Healthcare for the Underserved: A Lesson from the Persian Gulf" (2009). *AMCIS 2009 Proceedings*. 48.

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Pricing Transparency in Healthcare for the Underserved: A Lesson from the Persian Gulf*Nelson King*

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Abstract:

The rising cost of healthcare in the U.S. has enlarged the underserved community. In the ongoing debate to lower healthcare costs, transparent pricing is one mechanism purported to make healthcare more affordable. The experience of a small hospital located in the Persian Gulf that integrated an outpatient physician order entry and billing system offers several lessons. First, IT can enable transparent pricing such that clinicians can make real-time treatment decisions that include cost as a criteria. Second, a focus on pricing transparency alters the integration trajectory for healthcare information systems. While IT may enable price transparency in the examination room, technology is limited in addressing the ethical underpinning of its use. However, lessons from the developing world offer insights into providing healthcare for more established societies.